

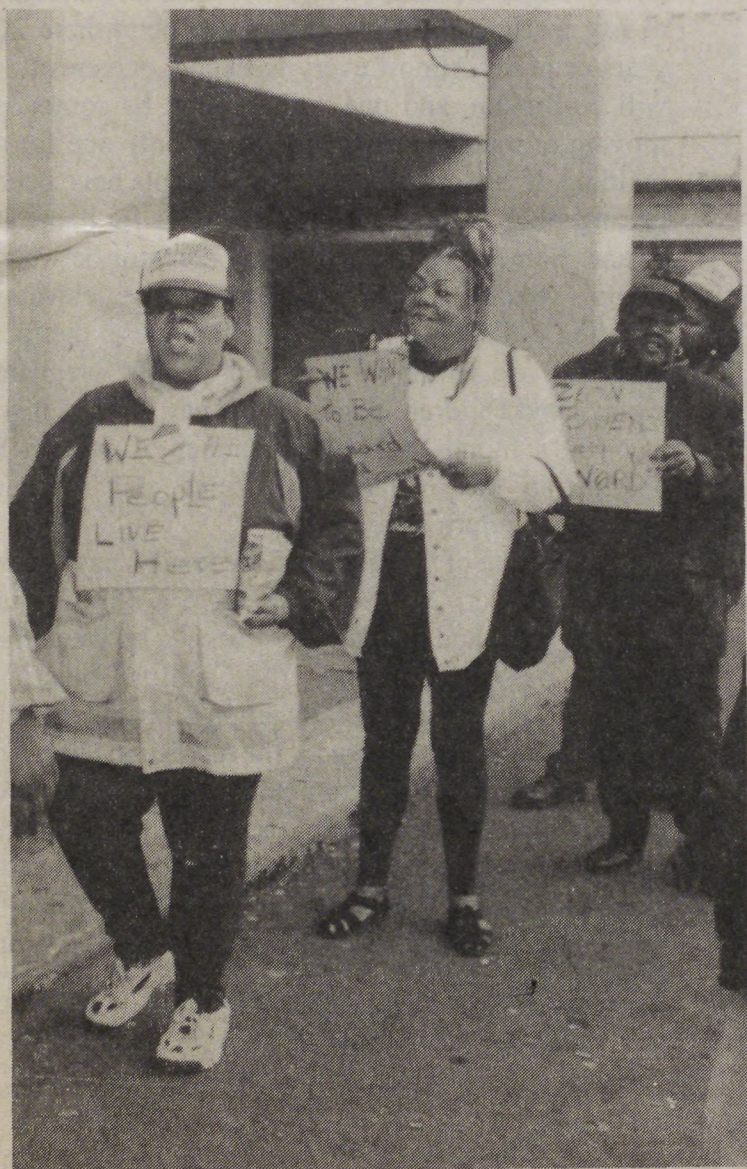
# Tenant Action News

Serving Tenants in the Greater Newark Area

Vol. 9 No. 2

N. J. DIVISION  
NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Winter 2000



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# Around Town

## 15 Hill St.

The Tenants' Association held a Thanksgiving dinner and Fashion Show in the community room on November 20. It was a beautiful event! The building itself has had new alarm systems installed and the intercom system repaired. The Tenants Association meets regularly. The officers are: Darleane Parker, President, Debbie Pettitway, Vice President, Secretary, Laurie O'Neil, and Treasurer Richard Gram.

## Lincoln Park Towers

Lincoln Park Towers held the installation of its new officers in November. They are: President Barbara Sparger, Vice President Savannah Howell, Recording Secretary Gladys White, Financial Secretary, Wilimina Simmons, and Treasurer Mildred Justice. Congratulations to all!

## 2 Nevada St.

Two Nevada St. is getting a facelift. The hallways are being painted on every floor. Tenants who did not have frost free refrigerators are getting new refrigerators. At one recent meeting, the tenants from Court St. were invited to attend. Speakers addressed the residents about Y2K. Another speaker from a neighborhood bank talked about direct deposit, and several people took the opportunity to sign up for that program. There was also a representative from St. Barnabas Hospital to come and talk about hospitals and Y2K. Senator Rice was also a speaker.

The Tenant Association holds Bingo for tenants every Tuesday and Thursday. Every Friday breakfast is served for a cost of \$1.75. There is also a 14 week exercise class going on in the building.

## E. T. Bowser

Tenants in this building have written a letter to the owner. They are upset because they are being charged a monthly parking fee of \$30 (not in the lease), and yet there is no security for their cars.. Cars have been vandalized and stolen. Tenants in this building are concerned about the \$30 annual rent increase. Tenants have other issues too, like the lack of place for children to play. Tenants are continuing to work together to solve the problems.

## St. James Towers

The continual rent increases in this building have brought the rents so high it is hard for residents to pay, particularly those who have been there 20 years or more. Almost every weekend, one elevator will be broken, and one will be used by someone moving or maintenance. This leaves only one for a building of 200 apartments to use. People have been getting stuck in the elevator, sometimes for hours at a time. Some have jumped out an elevator between floors, which is very dangerous. The elevator situation is a serious health violation due to the fact that there are senior citizens, sick people, pregnant women and children. Some people pay rents as high as \$900 a month, while the number of section 8 apartments has increased. Rodents and roaches continue to return as problems.

In spite of the problems, the tenants have been active. On Oct. 23, 1999 they gave a bus ride to Atlantic City, and divided the proceeds between the tenant association and the senior meeting organization. The tenant association is raising money for recreational equipment for the recreation room, so the children will have something to do. They are organizing a drill team for girls, ages 5 to 16. There are plans for a cheerleading squad. For boys there are plans to organize events such as football, basketball, and karate. The association held a Halloween party on October 31.

Thanks to Ann Davis, and Lori Coxson, HUD Tenant Coalition's new VISTA volunteers, for their help in collecting the stories on the Around The Town pages. Also thanks to Frank Hutchins, Bill Good, Michelle Hopkins and Frank Morris for work behind the scenes, Juan Haró for translations, and Donyale Ryan for photographs and stories throughout the issue.



# Around Town

## Zion Towers

Zion Towers tenants held an early morning protest at their building, in order to protest the lack of tenant involvement in a screening committee (*see cover photo*). Management in the building has refused to allow resident participation in a screening committee. There are problems with security in the building. Mice are a problem, and the building lacks cleanliness. The Tenants Association meets monthly. Zion Towers residents continue to question their yearly rent increase, and have had positive results.

## Georgia King Village

Tenants have many complaints, among them: mice, poor elevator service, maintenance in the hallways, insufficient lighting on the premises, and management practices and attitudes.

## Brick Towers

The City of Newark has asked a municipal court judge to appoint a receiver for Brick Towers, because of the continuing unsolved problems in the building. The elevators at Brick Towers have had continual problems, sometimes being out for as long as two weeks. An article in the Star Ledger showed photographs of residents climbing the Brick Towers stairwells, climbing 16 stories in some cases, with the headline, "Stairway of Despair." On Friday, Nov. 19, 1999, the security guards were laid off, leaving the building without security for four days, before a new security company was hired (with funds from HUD). HUD provides more than \$2 million annually in rent subsidies to Brick Towers.

## Spruce Park Apartments

On Oct. 31, 1999, the Tenants Association held a Halloween Party for the children of the building, where the children had a festive, safe time. The Tenants' Association meets every month.



*Members of the HUD Tenants' Coalition, along with other groups who received funds from the Campaign for Human Development this year, shared a recent lunch in Newark. The Campaign for Human Development raises funds from donations by parishoners of Catholic Churches. From left to right Olivette Simpson from St. James CDC, Elaine Sewell and Frank Morris from HUD Tenants' Coalition, Lamar Bennett from St. James, Hubert Dixon from CHD Washington, D.C. office, Miriam Mejia/Garcia from St. James CDC, Bill Good from HTC, and Sister Cathy Daly, Campaign for Human Development Newark office.*

## Corinthian Towers

Tenants meet every month, and are dealing with some problems, such as: faulty stoves, the need for the fence to be put up, and security for cars (tenant cars have been towed).

*On the cover: Tenants from Zion Towers hold an early morning march & rally about the issues in their building.*



# Help Build Tenant Power

The **Coalition To Save Rent Control (CTSRC)** & the **HUD Tenants' Coalition** have been volunteer organizations that help provide information on tenant rights and assists individual tenants in organizing their buildings. Clip this coupon and return it with any amount of money you can contribute to help continue this work.

- ☐ Here's my \$5 donation to this newsletter, keep it coming.  
☐ I can't afford to subscribe, but keep me on the mailing list.
- ☐ Here's my subscription and a donation to help work for Tenant Awareness and Rights in Newark.  
☐ \$10   ☐ \$20   ☐ \$25   ☐ other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Checks should be made out to:

**NCN - Tenant Project** and sent to NCN, 944ad St., Newark, N.J. 07102

## Landlords Must Take Section 8

The New Jersey Supreme Court has ruled that landlords cannot refuse to participate in the Section 8 program if one of their tenants becomes eligible for it. The case (known as the Franklin case) in West New York, involved a 65 year old widow, who tried to use her Section 8 voucher to pay a portion of her rent. The landlord claimed that participation was voluntary, and he did not want to get entangled in "bureaucracy", and filed against the tenant for nonpayment of rent.

The Supreme Court ruled that landlords must accept Section 8 vouchers for existing tenants, and that fear of red tape was not a reason to refuse a voucher.

## Thank You!

Special thanks to: United Church of Christ, Campaign for Human Development, the VISTA Program, IOLTA Fund, Essex Newark Legal Services, Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry, Black United Fund, St. Stephan's United Church of Christ in Newark, First Congregational United Church of Christ in Westfield, Ironbound Community Corporation, the Dominican Sisters, and the Claretian Fathers Social Justice Fund. Thank you also to Milton Zisman and Lori Outzs Borgen for their hard work assisting tenants with rent increase applications.



## Camp-Out Succeeds In Drawing Help For Garden Spires

It was a week of prayers, and songs, meetings, plans, and promises. It was a week that drew together many people, in sometimes unlikely combinations. It was a week that brought hope to many tenants across the city of Newark, and to many residents of Garden Spires Apartments, on First Street in Newark. It was the week Councilman Cory Booker set up a tent in the Garden Spires parking lot, and "camped out" there to call attention to the ongoing problems in the building, and to work on solutions.

"I really firmly believe we have a mountain to move," Councilman Booker said, as the camp out began. "These problems didn't come in a day, and they're not going to leave in a minute.... But I'd rather do something than nothing."

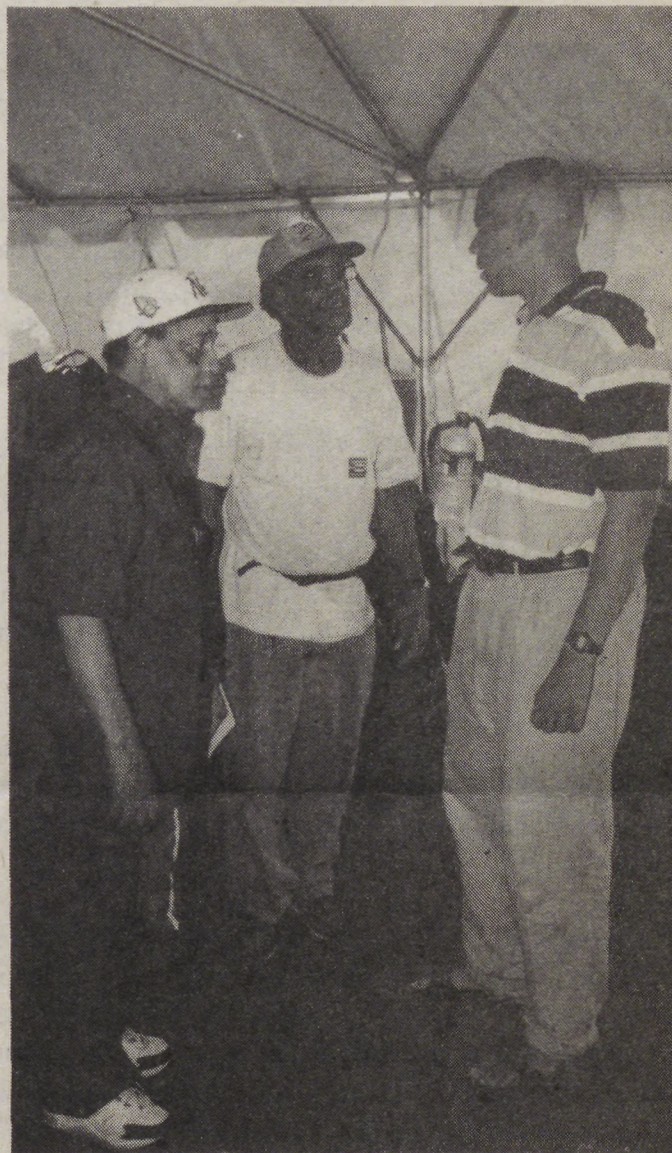
***"These problems didn't come in a day, and they're not going to leave in a minute...But I'd rather do something than nothing."***

*Councilman Cory Booker*

Garden Spires, which houses over 1000 residents in its two 20 story buildings, has had a history of problems, going back many years. The building is a member of the **HUD Tenants' Coalition**, and HTC members supported the "camp out" in a variety of ways throughout the ten days it lasted, August 15 to August 25, 1999.

Each day of the "camp-out" had a different theme, and highlighted different resources which could or should be brought to the building. On Tuesday, tenant organizing day, tenants from the HUD Tenants' Coalition set up shop to hand out literature at a table in the building's parking lot, and talk with residents.

HTC Senior Staff member Frank Hutchins assisted Councilman Booker in running a number of tenant meetings that took place a number of times during the week. Elaine Sewell, Tenant President at Garden Spires, seemed to be everywhere.



*Councilman Cory Booker talking with Frank Morris (left) and Frank Hutchins (center) in the tent which was set up in the parking lot at Garden Spires..*

Before the week was over, many people and programs were present, lending their support, or making plans for the future. Mayor Sharpe James pledged the cooperation of his department heads, from police, to code enforcement, to recreation and parks.

"What did it accomplish?" said Michelle Hopkins, a new HTC staff person, and resident at Garden Spires. "We now have much better security,

**cont. on p. 10**



## Resources

*The following are available from the HUD Tenants' Coalition. To order, call 589-3353 or 643-7711:*

\* **Know Your Rights Fact Sheets.** These 2 fact sheets cover tenants rights on eviction, and most of the local ordinances in Newark. They are free.

\* **Truth In Renting Law.** This booklet covers the state laws which apply to tenants. Available for its cost, \$1. It is also available in Spanish.

\* **Knowing Where To Call.** A five page list of key phone numbers for tenants in Newark. Free *while they last*.

\* **Recertification.** This booklet was developed for a workshop and includes a summary of common questions and important documents during your recertification process. \$1 for duplication.

\* HUD Tenants' Coalition **T shirts, Sweatshirts, Key Rings, Photo Mugs, Caps** available ranging in price. Contact Bill Good for more information or to place orders at 643-7711.

\* **Looking Out For Your Legal Rights Magazine.** This excellent magazine, published by Legal Services of New Jersey, is written in understandable language. Recent issues have included articles like, "The Nuts and Bolts of Fighting Evictions", "Your Rights When Your Rent Is Increased," and "Fair Credit Reporting." Subscriptions are \$10 a year, for 10 issues. It is also available at local Legal Services Offices. Contact Legal Services of New Jersey for subscription information, at 732-572-9100.

\* **Out of Reach** - The latest publication from the National Low Income Housing Coalition reports on the gap between income and rents (*see article on page 6*). It is available from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (members \$25, non-members \$35) You can call 202-393-1973 or go to their website at <http://www.nlihc.org>. For copies (at copying cost) of New Jersey information only, contact HTC at 643-7711.

## Numbers Every Tenant Should Know...

- Newark Rent Control Board  
Staff: 733-3675  
Administrator: 733-6684  
Copies of rent control ordinance.
- Rutgers Urban Legal Clinic  
15 Washington St.  
353-5576
- Newark City Clerk's Office  
733-3844 or 733-3669.  
To find out about city ordinances.
- Landlord Tenant Court  
621-5343 or 621-5346.
- Essex-Newark Legal Services  
106 Halsey St.  
624-4500
- Essex-Newark Legal Services  
Senior Citizen Unit  
672-3838, -3839, -3840, 824-3000
- Newark Offices of Code Enforcement  
733-6470, 733-6471, 733-6481
- Newark Municipal Council  
733-3788

## Groups Working With Tenants

- \* **Coalition To Save Rent Control**  
Frank Hutchins, 643-7711
- \* **HUD Tenants' Coalition**  
Bill Good, Ann Davis, Frank Morris  
Lori Coxson, Michelle Hopkins 643-7711  
Nancy Zak, Juan Haró 589-3353



## NJMFHA Officials Tour Subsidized Housing

by Donayle Ryan

On Friday, August 13, 1999, Deborah De Santis, Director of New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency (HFMA), accompanied by Technical Services Coordinator, Harry Jones, III, and Multi-Family Housing Director, Anthony Cupano, arrived at Newark's Penn Station. Newark HUD Tenant Coalition members Nancy Zak, Frank Hutchins, Bill Good, and myself, along with attorney Lori Outzs Borgen, greeted the trio of state officials.

The purpose of their visit was a fact finding tour of HUD subsidized housing, with a chance for resident leaders to meet those officials who are directly responsible for the funding and care of some of the buildings which are monitored by NJHFMA.

Our first stop was Court Towers senior citizens complex, located near Newark's City Hall, 1 Court St. The group's host was Horace Brown, president of the Tenant Association, who has voiced several resident concerns. Joining the session were the building manager and superintendent. It was the perfect background for the residents to discuss quality of life issues, such as bathroom accessibility for seniors using the community room, and garbage disposal.

Next stop was Georgia King Village, where Tenant President Frances Houston guided the inspection. The building recently underwent major rehabilitation to correct leaking in the building's structure, but some residents say the leaks are still there. Harry Jones, from HFMA promised to contact the contractors responsible for doing the work. A major issue for Georgia King Village residents was the amount of time the elevators did not work. This has caused great distress for the 250 families who reside there.

The next stop was Zion Towers, a building in the City's South Ward. Several apartments, laundry and community room inspections were done. This Marzulli managed building has received major rehabilitation money from HUD. Tenant President, Melvetta Kilpatrick, expressed disappointment in the



HUD officials Harry Jones (left) and Anthony Cupano (right) and members of HTC leaving the Homes Court building after meeting with residents, as part of a tour of properties in Newark hosted by HTC.

management company's ability to abate problems at Zion. Inspection of the laundry room revealed hazardous conditions of an open floor drain, uncollected refuse near the dryers, a common cause of fire. Other complaints were about security personnel, and their lack of professionalism. Doris Childs, a resident of Zion Towers, wanted to know by what right did Marzulli discontinue the tenants screening committee. (She and other residents believe that many problems in the building are related to the kind of tenants being let in). (Tenants held a demonstration about this issue at their building, cover photo).

At approximately 1:45, the group arrived at Homes Court, a New Community Corporation development in the Central Ward. Homes Court is a poorly designed and badly deteriorating duplex, in

cont. on p. 9



# Thousands Struggle To Pay The Rent

Janet Whittaker is a single mother in Trenton, New Jersey, whose job pays \$5.15 an hour, New Jersey's minimum wage. Her goal is to move out of the apartment she lives in, which is federally subsidized. But to pay market rents in her area, she would have to be earning \$28,220 a year.

"It's a struggle to find affordable housing," said Ms. Whittaker, at a Press Conference, held by the Affordable Housing Network of New Jersey.

The Press Conference was called to publicize findings of the **Out of Reach Report**, published by the National Low Income Housing Coalition in September 1999.

The report shows New Jersey second only to Hawaii in the gap between income from a minimum wage job, and rent required for an apartment.

The study estimated that a New Jersey renter would need to earn three times the minimum wage - \$5.15 an hour - to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent. Put another way, a minimum wage earner would have to work 123 hours a week to afford the rent.

The average fair market rent for a one bedroom apartment in New Jersey is \$683. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment in New Jersey is \$827.

The report found that 45% of New Jersey renters this year cannot afford an apartment at the fair market rent. This is up from 41% last year.

The Affordable Housing Network is calling for a number of steps to help solve the problem. "Raising the federal minimum wage is one solution," said Lucy Voorhoeve, from the Affordable Housing network. "You can also bring down the cost of housing, and help people develop job training so that they can achieve higher wages."

The Network is supporting a six-point

"community development platform", which includes state tax credits to spur production of affordable housing, a state rental assistance program, and other measures.

According to another report, "*Working But Still Poor In New Jersey*," published by Association for Children of New Jersey, New Jersey is one of the most expensive state in which to live. "In New Jersey, it is estimated that the livable wage for a family of four (two adults and two children) is \$37,932 - more than twice the federal poverty level for the same family size.

The report states that wages are actually falling. "After adjusting for inflation, the minimum wage today is 30% lower than it was in 1968. A person working 30 hours per week at \$7.00 per hour earns \$10,920 annually. That is \$2,213 below the poverty level for a family with one adult and two children.

The ACNJ report also recommends raising the federal minimum wage. ACNJ also suggests extending the Earned Income Tax Credit, and expanding child care opportunities.

## Children in Working Poor Families



**40%**

of all poor people are under age 18, even though this age group comprises only 26% of the population.

**69%**

of children living in poverty in 1997 lived in households in which at least one person worked that year.

© 1999, United States Catholic Conference (Catholic Campaign for Human Development)  
Statistics: United States Census Bureau



# Determined Tenants Win Fight Against 7.5% Rent Increase!

by Harriet Aschoff, Chair,  
Overlook Terrace Tenant Association

Annually, we (the Tenants Association of Overlook Terrace in West New York) try new strategies to combat our landlord's rent increase requests. For years, we chased their tail around the same circle - following their guideline of whom to address our letter(s) of objection to. We were always successful in knocking off a few percentage points via our in-depth letters of logical objection to costs on the owner's financial reports.

However, this year, we took two new approaches. The Tenants' Association Board hired a practicing CPA to analyze the landlords' financial statements, and we scheduled a management meeting to verbally object to the rent increase.

For the past two years, we found that professional accountants were an effective way to substantiate our Tenant Association's rent increase objections. Accountants always use "numbers and ratios" to evaluate the financial status of large corporations. Overlook's financial reports showed that its owners collect over \$4 million annually from rents, and its "cash, cash equivalents, and profit had increased since 1998 by 23%, 44% and 63% respectively.

At the Tenant Association Board's request, our accountant reported the above findings at our September 14<sup>th</sup> management meeting with New Jersey Housing Management Finance Agency, Tidewater Management Corporation, and the West New York Mayor's Office. The accountant stated that the above percentages mean, "Overlook Terrace's financial condition is Healthy with a capital H, and a rent increase would be unreasonable. In closing, I might add, if Overlook Terrace was a public corporation, I would buy its stock."

The managers were taken aback by our accountant's findings. The New Jersey Housing Mortgage and Finance Agency denied the 7.5% rent increase!

*Editor's note: Overlook Terrace is located in West New York, New Jersey, and has been working with the HUD Tenants' Coalition (HTC) on rent increase issues. HTC has been assisting tenants in their efforts to exercise their rights to thoroughly review and question proposed rent increases for a number of years. HTC has been helped in this effort by volunteer Milton Zisman, an accountant, and lawyer Lori Outz Borgen of the Gibbons Fellowship of the firm Gibbons, Del Deo.*

*This year, HTC got some additional progress from a meeting initiated with Anthony Cupano, NJHMF's Multi-Family Housing Director, to discuss the rent increase procedures. It was agreed that tenants could see building budgets that are submitted annually - not just what is in the rent increase package. This will help tenants to be more prepared for the rent increase applications. There are other changes which HTC believes should happen, such as the right to a hearing about the proposed rent increases. If your building is facing a rent increase, or you wish to know what to do when it does, contact HTC at 643-7711.*

## Housing Tour

*continued from p. 7*

which the concrete rails and stairways are falling apart. Steel bracing and support jacks can be found everywhere. Phil Grate, Tenant President, and retired National Alliance of HUD Tenant Board member, led the group through the site. Residents were concerned about elevators that are poorly maintained, exposed wiring within the reach of children, vandalism to entry gate of the complex, lack of security, and unattended construction equipment.

The tour concluded at 3:00 PM, and Director De Santis, and the officials with her, were driven back to Penn Station.



## Right To Speak: Where Is Democracy?

Senator Ronald Rice introduced a bill which would require all cities to allow citizens to speak, on whatever topic they wish, at their City Council meeting. The bill, Senate bill 1805, was passed 35 to 0 in the Senate. The companion bill (A 2368) must now be passed by the Assembly, and signed by the Governor.

Since September 1997, Newark residents have not been able to speak at their own City council meetings, unless an issue is on the agenda for "Second Reading and Final Passage." Most residents have no access to the agendas. Many items are added on as "late starters", that is no one sees them until the time of the meeting. The only opportunity residents get to speak is in Citizen Hearing meetings which are held infrequently in each ward, and which are not attended by all Council members, and are not official voting meetings. (At the last meeting in the East Ward, only 2 Councilpersons were in attendance).

***"Free speech is the foundation on which strong communities are built."***

***Councilman Cory Booker***

Councilman Cory Booker, who has spoken up a return of the citizens right to speak, has said, "The policy decisions, issues of resource allocation, and other challenging choices facing our City must not be decided in a vacuum by a select few. Instead, citizens should have the right to come before their entire governing body...and air their concerns, share their ideas, or voice their dissent. Such participation is crucial to a vibrant future for our City....As was understood by the founding Fathers of the United States, and was included in the first Amendment to the United States Constitution, free speech is the foundation upon which strong communities are built."

New Jersey Citizens Action, a statewide citizen group with 60,000 members has endorsed the Rice bill, saying, "The right to redress one's government is fundamental to our nationhood and vital to our communities."

Residents of Newark have also been active to get their right to speak back. They have circulated a referendum petition, which has been presented to the City Clerk. Now the City Council will have to put the right to speak on the ballot, so people can vote on it. For more information on this issues, call 643-7711.



*Cory Booker at the Aspen Riverpark Apartments with children from the Aspen Superkids Program..*

### **Tent At Garden Spires**

**cont. from p. 5**

since the police are in the building, and walking from floor to floor. We are getting a new paved over area for recreational use for the kids. The people doing drugs seem to have moved elsewhere. We are getting a recreation room for the children inside also."

In a published letter to the Star Ledger, Frank Hutchins, from the HUD Tenants' Coalition, said, "Councilman Booker took greatly needed action when he set up his tent at Garden Spires Apartments to draw attention to the problems experienced by residents of those buildings. ...Residents often work hard together, forming tenant associations to improve the quality of life in the buildings...Residents should be strongly supported in their effort and should receive public attention and resources...Thank you Councilman Booker for seeing the problems and for caring enough to do something to call attention to them and to work to solve them."



## Minneapolis Tenants Win Court Case Against HUD

Tenants in the Oak Grove Towers in Minneapolis, have won a victory against the Department of Housing and Urban Development, for its illegal approval of the termination of housing subsidies at the 228 unit high rise building two years ago.

The Judge in the case ruled that HUD's notice to terminate Section 8's was defective, and that HUD had not implemented a congressional directive to adjust Section 8 vouchers to cover future rent increases.

Oak Grove Towers has been home to hundreds of low income people, many of them senior citizens, disabled people, minorities, and families with children. In June, tenants at Oak Grove Towers were informed by owner Antonio Bernardi that he would prepay the government subsidized mortgage on the building, terminate the housing assistance (Section 8) contract covering 166 units, raise rents as much as \$200 a month, and convert the building to a market rate operation..

***"Our government is supposed to uphold the laws, not break them so that some rich guy can get even richer off our backs."***

Despite state and federal laws requiring a minimum of one year's notice to tenants of such actions, the local HUD office approved the owner's plans with less than four month's notice. Tenants were to be given housing vouchers that would allow them to remain in place *for only one year*, after which they were expected to find housing elsewhere. With a rental vacancy rate at less than 2%, and a growing reluctance by landlords to accept vouchers, the tenants feared displacement and possible homelessness.

"The ending of housing subsidies at Oak Grove Towers has put all of us low income tenants in a frightening situation. With the low vacancy rate, there is no place for us to go. Even if there was, how are 80 and 90 year old people, many who have problems walking and no car, supposed to go out and

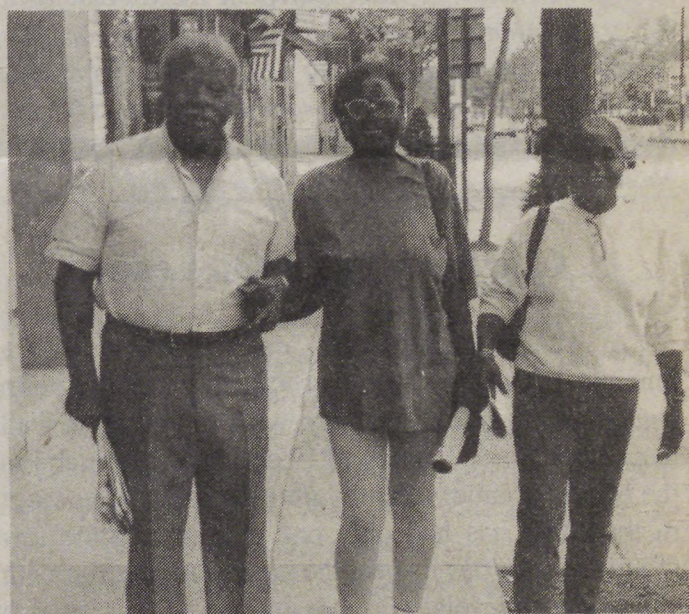
find another place? HUD, our government, really let us down," said one housing advocate.

"Our government is supposed to uphold the laws, not break them so that some rich guy can get even richer off our backs," said Dorothy Davis, another housing advocate.

*This article is excerpted from an article by Charlie Warner which appeared in the National Alliance of HUD Tenants newsletter.*

**FLASH:** : Since this article was written, having lost in court, HUD went to Congress and got changes in the regulations, making their procedure legal.

### Newark NAHT Conference Delegates

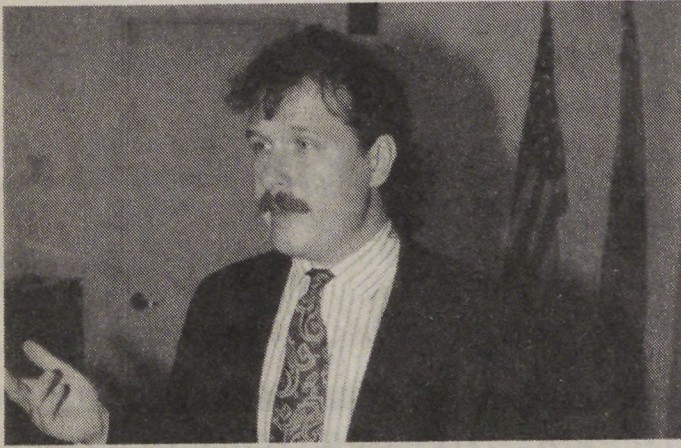


*Members of the HUD Tenants' Coalition who attended the National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT) Conference in Washington, D.C. in June (from left to right): Horace Brown, Martha Edwards, and Jeanette Miller. Others HTC members who attended the Conference were: Donyale Ryan, Phillip Grate, Berenice Wallace, and Ethel Ellis*

*Congratulations to Horace Brown, who has been elected to represent Newark on the NAHT Board. Mr. Brown is Tenant President at Court Towers. A special thank you to outgoing Board members Ethel Ellis and Phillip Grate.*



## Recertification Workshop



*Attorney Michael Wojcik speaks at the annual HTC Recertification Workshop, where tenants can learn how recertification is supposed to be done, and what they can do when it isn't. HTC's workshop series is held at Seton Hall Law School's Center for Social Justice in Newark.*

## Citizens Victory On Lead

The HUD Tenants' Coalition was one of a number of groups who participated in a write-in campaign to get the City of Newark to hire more lead inspectors. Since January of 1999, Newark, which has the largest number of childhood lead poisoning cases in the state, has had only one inspector. State law requires that cities inspect the homes of children with elevated lead levels.

Newark, a city with roughly 90,000 occupied residences, "there's obviously no way in the world that one inspector could do it," said Dr. Steve Marcus, head of the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System.

Because of the write-in campaign, organized by New Jersey Citizen Action, the City Council amended its budget, and added funds for more inspectors. Thanks to all those who took part in this successful campaign.

## *Newark's New Masterplan Ignores Quality of Life Issues Important To City Residents*

The City of Newark has been working on a new Masterplan for over a year. (A Masterplan document helps set the vision and direction for the use of land in your city). But they have not put the things which residents feel strongly about - schools, parks, and community facilities - onto their maps.

Newark has paid consultants a lot of money to prepare various parts of the plan. At the same time, the City has had a "public participation" process, once a month meetings held primarily in the basement of City Hall. In an effort to increase the amount of resident participation in planning for the future of their neighborhoods, non-profits offered to hold meetings in each ward to get input. Residents concerns, both in the ward meetings, and in the City Hall meetings, have been largely ignored in the latest versions of the Land Use maps (the first part of the masterplan).

In other cities, doing new Land Use maps and a new masterplan begins with an analysis of each neighborhood - what are its strengths and weaknesses, what is the vision for that particular area. This has not happened in Newark. In other cities, things which are important for the quality of life of residents, for example, parks, schools, and community facilities are put onto the Land Use maps, so that the land is held, and won't be developed. This has not happened in Newark. The City administrators have said they will put the parks and schools on later

A coalition of about 20 non-profit organizations is demanding that the City include resident concerns in its plans. Coalition representatives are meeting with Central Planning Board members, and City Council persons, because both the Central Planning Board and the City Council must both vote on the Land Use Maps, and the whole masterplan. "This is an opportunity to plan for our neighborhoods, to think about what will make the quality of life better for residents. This is the time to do the planning, and to do it right," said one resident.



## M2M Update

M2M - sounds like a sci-fi-movie, but what does it mean?

M2M stands for HUD's new Mark-To-Market program which is just beginning to go into effect around the country. Over the last few months, HUD has signed twenty-three agreements with the Participating Administrative Entities (PAEs) that will be doing the mortgage restructuring for eligible project-based Section 8 buildings across the country.

Buildings eligible for Mark-To-Market are those which have expiring Section 8 contracts where rents are much higher than rents in neighboring unsubsidized buildings. Properties in bad condition, those with mortgages not insured or held by HUD, and those with rents lower than the surrounding private market are ineligible for the program.

The PAE in New Jersey is the New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency, although in a few cases, private companies are involved.

The National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT) has been working to influence the M2M regulations, to make them "tenant friendly". One unresolved issue is to make sure that tenants will have access to all the financial information they need to be informed about their building: the operating budget, information about who owns the property, market comparability information.

There are a number of other issues, where NAHT is playing a key role. NAHT has formed an M2M committee, and the members from all over the country communicate by phone call.

HUD has approved OTAG grants (Outreach Training and Assistance Grants) to provide help for residents to organize in M2M buildings. The HUD Tenants Coalition and the Tenant Preservation Project have received an OTAG M2M grant. If you are in an M2M eligible building, contact HTC at 643-7711 for information and assistance.

*Some information for this article was taken from an article by Joe Heaphy which appeared in the NAHT newsletter.*



*HUD Tenants' Coalition members and friends met with Deborah De Santis, director of the M2M Participating Administrative Entity for New Jersey, the New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency. From left to right (front): Cesar Torres, Deputy director of Essex Newark Legal Services, Francis Thomas from NJHFMA, Cynthia Pullen from HTC, Director Deborah DeSantis, Jeanette Miller, Mary Johnson,. (Back row) Bill Good (HTC), Lori Outzs Borgen from Gibbons Del Deo, Frank Hutchins, Elaine Sewell, Frank Morris and Janice Adams.*

## Right To Organize

The HUD Tenants Coalition, along with tenant organizations from all over the country, commented on proposed new regulations by HUD about tenants right to organize in their buildings.

While HUD's proposed regulations were generally positive, there were some provisions which were negative, such as their definition of a "legitimate" tenant association.

Tenants who try to organize a group to make improvements in their buildings, have sometimes been harassed in various ways, or even threatened with eviction.

Because of pressure from tenant organizations, HUD has published a brochure for tenants about their right to organize in their buildings. They have also written a directive to managers which describes the rights tenants have to meet, and to have a room on the premises to do so.

Copies of the brochure and directive are available through HUD, 622-7900, or order through the HUD Tenants Coalition by calling 643-7711.



## Where Have We Been?

You may have seen the HUD Tenants' Coalition at one of these recent events:

- 1) the Peoples Festival in downtown Newark
- 2) the West Side Park festival
- 3) the Alliance for Justice First Monday Program at Rutgers Law School, commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Federal Housing Act

### Church Partners With Apartment Residents

Bill Good, HTC staff member, spoke after a service at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Westfield. This Church, along with St. Stephan's in Newark, help run a Saturday recreation program at the Aspen Riverpark Apartments. The UCC recently gave a grant for furniture for the children's meeting room, and for program expenses for the "Aspen Superkids" program. Congratulations to all involved with the Aspen Riverpark Program, and keep up the good work!

## Newark's New School Plan

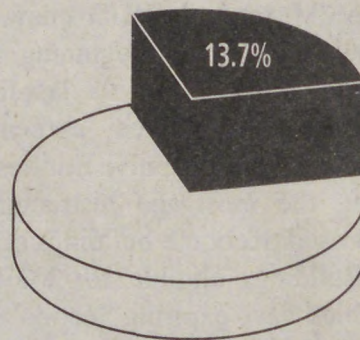
As a result of the Abbott vs. Burke Supreme Court decision, the state must repair and replace deteriorating and overcrowded schools in the Abbott districts. The Newark School Board's Plan calls for 9 new schools on new sites, 34 replacement schools (that is new schools on the same site or close by), 29 schools to receive renovations and additions, and 12 schools to be discontinued on current sites.

Non-profit organizations throughout the city have asked the School Board to hold community meetings to present the plan to the public, to get comments or suggestions from parents and taxpayers.

If you want information about what is planned for your community's schools, or which group might be holding a community meeting about schools in your area, you can call Nancy Zak at 589-3353.

## Poverty in America

36.5 million  
Americans,  
13.7% of  
the total  
population,  
lived below  
the poverty  
level in 1996.



© 1998, United States Catholic Conference (Catholic Campaign for Human Development)  
Statistics: United States Census Bureau

## Public Housing

cont. from p. 14

residents are uneasy about participating in a program if their housing depends "upon their ability to perform adequately in a program that was prescribed, that they didn't have a role in shaping, and that is of untested quality," says National Low Income Housing Coalition spokesperson Crowley.

Another question being asked is where do displaced residents go. A government report shows that less than half of the residents of the old units "return to the new units, with as low as an 8% return rate in one development. Residents who choose to leave public housing are offered housing counseling services says HUD's Bacon. But since vouchers can mean residents must contribute more to rent than they had in public housing, and since many landlords won't participate in Section 8, the pickings are slim when residents are looking for apartments.

Many of the questions raised in this article have been asked recently in Newark by tenants in Stella Wright Homes, which is scheduled to be demolished next.

*This article is largely an edited version of an article by Winton Pitcoff in Shelterforce national housing magazine, except for information added which is specific to Newark.*



## New HOPE or New Problems for Public Housing?

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's latest initiative for its public housing program, HOPE VI, is the subject of debate as far as how it will actually impact on low income residents.

In 1989, Congress appointed the National Commission on severely Distressed Public Housing to assess the condition of the nation's public housing stock. The commission reported that 86,000 out of 1.2 million public housing units were severely distressed, "because of their deterioration, and uninhabitable living conditions, increasing levels of poverty, inadequate and fragmented services reaching only a portion of the residents, institutional abandonment, and location in neighborhoods often as blighted as the sites themselves."

HOPE VI is billed as "more than bricks and mortar. It combines capital improvements with other programs, like greater income mix among residents, and support service programs to help residents get and keep jobs. Around the country, more than \$3 billion has been divided among 104 cities to demolish 47,856 public housing units, construct 33,009, and rehab 8,614 more. Some of the construction will be for market rate units.

In Newark, the most recent demolishing took place on December 11, 1999 when another high rise building at Hayes Homes in the Central Ward will be dynamited. The Newark Housing Authority has taken down Edward Scudder Homes, Christopher Columbus Homes, a portion of Walsh Homes, Otto Kretchmer Homes, and nearly all of Hayes Homes. Plans are on the table to raze Stella Wright Homes. Hayes Homes was built in 1954, and contained 1,458 one to five bedroom units. It is being replaced by mixed income townhouses using HOPE VI funds.

The way HOPE VI is supposed to work, and the way it is working seem to be at odds around the country. HOPE VI calls for resident participation, yet there are legal challenges in a number of cities from tenant groups which charge that demolition and displacement plans have been drafted and submitted without resident involvement.

According to Othello Poulard, Director of the Public Housing Initiative at the Center for Community change, while some residents may approve the plan, they may not represent the entire population of the



*The site of the Columbus Homes demolition in Newark. Public housing demolition continues around the country.*

development. Tenant leaders are often employed by the local PHA, he points out, leading to a potential conflict of interest. An example, is the Lincoln Court public housing complex in Cincinnati. "The PHA forced the plan down the residents' throats," said George Lee, a resident. "There was no vote taken."

Elinor Bacon, Secretary in HUD's Office of Public Housing Investments is making a concerted effort to visit sites where residents feel shut out of the process, and she says that future requirements will stress the need to include residents.

### New Housing For Whom?

The National Low Income Housing Coalition says the flaw in HOPE VI is that it does not accommodate people who are displaced, and have the worst case housing needs, and makes the problem worse by making fewer units accessible. HOPE VI is displacing more families than there are new units being built. In many cities displaced families are told they will be "eligible" for the newly built units, but often that translates into several households competing for each available unit.

Under HOPE VI, residents who move in are required to sign a contract outlining their educational and employment goals, and told that failure to progress toward these goals will result in eviction. Some

**Cont. on p. 14**



**Essex Newark Servicios Legales**  
624-4500

**Rutgers Urban Clinica Legal**  
353-6576

**Essex Newark Legal Services**  
**Senior Citizens Unit**  
672-3838, -3839, -3840

**HUD Tenants' Coalition**  
643-7711

**Ciudad de Newark**  
Junta de Rentas Controladas  
733-3675  
Coacción Codigo  
733-6471  
Ayuda de Califacción  
733-6471, 6481  
Municipal Council  
733-3788  
City Clerk  
733-3844

## Caseros Deben Tomar Sección 8

La Corte Suprema de New Jersey llevo a la resolución que los caseros no pueden rechazar a participar en el programa de Sección 8 si uno de sus inquilinos es elegible para recibirlo. El caso en West New York se trataba de una viuda de 65 años de edad que trato de usar su certificado de Sección 8 para pagar parte de su renta. El casero reclama que ser participante es voluntario y que el no queria ser parte de una "burocracia" y hizo un reclamo legal contra la inquilina por no pagar renta.

La Corte Suprema declaro que los caseros deben aceptar la Sección 8 de parte de inquilinos existentes y que la preocupación de "burocracia" no es razon de rechazar el certificado.

### Que obtiene si se hace miembro de HTC:

HTC ayuda a organizaciones de inquilinos:

- ◆ ayudar a iniciarse y seguir siendo efectivo (escribir las reglas de la organización, tener elecciones, etc.)
- ◆ reuniones mensuales para compartir estrategias
- ◆ Noticias de Acción de Inquilinos - el unico periodico para inquilinos
- ◆ ayudar en luchar contra el hostigamiento de dueños, incremento de renta ilegales, etc.
- ◆ talleres en la escuela de leyes Seton Hall





# Encampamento Exitosa En Atraer Ayuda Para Garden Spires

Fue una semana de oraciones, canciones, reuniones, planificación y promesas. Fue una semana que atrajo a mucha gente y a veces combinaciones.. Fue una semana que trajo esperanza a muchos inquilinos de muchas partes de la Ciudad de Newark y a muchos residentes de los apartamentos Garden Spires de la calle First St. en Newark. Fue la semana que el Consejal Cory Booker levanto una carpa en el estacionamiento de caros de Garden Spires y se quedo en el encampamento para llamar atención a los problemas que se estan llevando a cabo en el edificio y para llegar a soluciones.

“Yo creo firmemente que tenemos una montaña que mover,” dijo el Concejal Booker cuando se inicio el campamento. “Estos problemas no llegaron en un dia y no se van a ir un un minuto...Pero yo prefiero hacer algo que hacer nada.”

Garden Spires, que da alojamiento a mas de 1000 residentes en sus dos edificios de 20 pisos, ha tenido una historia de problemas por muchos años. El edificio es un miembro del HUD Tenants Coalition (HTC) y miembros de HTC apoyaron al encampamento en varias maneras durante los diez dias que duro desde el 15 de Agosto al 25 de Agosto, 1999.

Cada dia del “encampamento” tenia un tema diferente y ilustro los diferentes recursos que no ó si deben ser traído a el edificio. El martes, el dia de organización de inquilinos, los inquilinos del HUD Tenants’ Coalition estuvieron ahi difundiendo literatura en una mesa en el estacionamiento de caros y hablando con los residentes. Miembro de trabajadores de HTC, Frank Hutchins asistio a el Consejal Booker en dirigir algunas reuniones de inquilinos que ocurrieron varias veces durante la semana. Elaine Sewell, Presidente de Inquilinos, en Garden Spires, parecia haber estado en todas partes.

Antes de que terminara la semana, mucha gente y programas se presentarán prestando su apoyo ó haciendo planes para el futuro. El Alcalde Sharpe James se comprometio a la cooperación de los que

encabezan a sus departamentos. Desde la policia, al enfezamiento de codigos, hasta los de recreación y parques.

“¿Que es lo que logro?”, dijo Michelle Hopkins, una nueva trabajdor de HTC, y residente de Garden Spires. “Ahora tenemos mucha mejor seguridad porque la policia ahora estan en el edificio y caminando piso por piso. Vamos a tener una nueva area de pavimento para uso recreacional para los niños. Las personas haciendo drogas se han mudado a otro lugar. Tambien vamos a tener un cuarto recreacional para niños adentro del edificio.”

En una carta publicada en el periodico Star Ledger, Frank Hutchins del HTC dijo, “El Consejal Booker tomo acción muy necesitada cuando levanto su encampamento en los apartamentos Garden Spires para atraer la atencion a los problemas que experimentian los residentes de esos edificios...Residentes muchas veces trabajan juntas formando asociaciones de inquilinos para mejorar la calidad de vida en los edificios. Residentes deben ser apoyados fuertemente en sus esfuerzos y deben recibir atención publica y recursos...Gracias Cory Booker por ver los problemas y por ser suficientemente comprensivo por hacer algo para llamar atención a ellos y para trabajar para resolverlos.”



*Councilman Cory Booker con los niños de los Aspen Superkids Program, Aspen Riverpark Apartments.*



# HUD Tenants' Coalición: Organizando Con Inquilinos

"Este grupo esta manteniendo inquilinos informados acerca de lo que esta pasando y sabiendo de cosas es el primer paso para involucrarse uno, participar y hacer cambios."

Esto es lo que dijo un inquilino recientemente acerca del HUD Tenants' Coalición (HTC), el grupo que organiza a inquilinos en edificios de dueños privados que reciben asistencia gubernamental en Newark.

Algunas de las cosas que HTC ha hecho recientemente incluye:

- \* Patrocinando foros acerca de los cambios a leyes federales de vivienda y trabajando con inquilinos de Newark para diseñar una estrategia para preservar vivienda de bajos ingresos.

- \* Foros Regionales con oficinas locales y federales de HUD, patrocinado con inquilinos del estado de Nueva York.

- \* Reuniones con el NJHFMA Director Deborah DeSantis el representante de la Asamblea John Kelly y el presidente del Comité de Vivienda del estado, enfocandose en regulaciones del incremento de renta que estan teniendo un impacto negativo a residentes .

Mas importante, HTC ha estado trabajando y aconsejando a inquilinos alrededor de la ciudad y atendiendo muchas reuniones. HTC esta asistiendo a residentes que estan organizando muy bien en sus edificios. Los trabajadores de HTC estan presentemente enfocandose en los edificios de Garden Spires, Spruce Spires, Center City Housing y Aspen Riverpark Apartments.

HTC ha crecido de 8 edificios de apartamentos a 30 edificios de alrededor de la ciudad que ahora son miembros. .

## ***Inquilinos Tienen El Derecho A Organizarse!***

Usted sabe que tiene el derecho a organizar a inquilinos en su edificio sin intervención?

Como unos de los resultados de los Foros Regionales, HJUD mando varias cartas a los encargados y dueños de apartamentos acerca de los derechos que tienen los inquilinos a organizar. Una carta, mandada en Noviembre de 1996, dice: "HUD tienen la expectación que los dueños y agentes encargados deben crear buenas relaciones entre residentes buenos y encargados. La participación y cooperación es importante en crear un ambiente apropiado para vivir y puede contribuir a una operación exitosa de estas propiedades..."

La carta continua diciendo que:

- \* Dueños tienen que proveer un espacio accesible para reuniones en el edificio para que asociaciones de residentes legítimas puedan tener reuniones.

- \* Dueños y encargados no pueden mandar representantes de los encargados del edificio a reuniones, de los inquilinos cuando no se les a pedido que atiendan.

- \* El desplazo, hostigamiento ó el cástigamiento de residentes que organizan ó que exigen sus derechos no es permitido.

- \* Tratar de influenciar a lideres de inquilinos ofreciendo favores a individuos como empleo, preferencias para trasladar, reducción de renta, reparos especiales ó otros beneficios no disponibles a todos no es permitido.

Un folleto acerca de los derechos de inquilinos debe ser proveido cada año a los inquilinos por los dueños o encargados en el idioma que los inquilinos hablan. Este folleto debe ser dado cuando el contrato es firmado ó en la entrevista de recertificación. Usted esta recibiendo el suyo?



# Miles Luchan Para Poder Pagar Renta

Janet Whittaker es una madre soltera en Trenton, New Jersey que recibe en su trabajo el salario minimo de New Jersey, \$5.15 a la hora. Su meta es de mudarse de su apartamento donde recibe subsidio federal. Pero para pagar rentas al mercado en su area, ella tuviera que ganar \$28,220 al año.

“Es una lucha encontrar vivienda de bajos ingresos,” dijo Ms. Whittaker, en una rueda de prensa organizada por el Affordable Housing Network en New Jersey.

La rueda de prensa fue llamada para publicar los resultados del Reporte “Sin Poder Alcanzar” publicado por el National Low Income Housing Coalition en Septiembre de 1999.

El reporte enseña que New Jersey es segundo despues de Hawaii en el hueco entre el ingreso de un trabajo de salariominimo y el costo de la renta requerida para un apartamento.

El estudio calculo aproximadamente que una persona que renta en New Jersey necesitaria ganar tres veces mas que el salario minimo = \$5.15 a la hora para poder alcanzar de pagar un apartamento de dos recamaras en el promedio del mercado de renta. En otras palabras, alguien que recibe un salario minimo tuviera que trabajar 123 horas a la semana para poder alcanzar de pagar la renta.

El promedio del mercado de renta para un apartamento de una recamara en New Jersey es \$683. El promedio de renta para un apartamento de dos recamaras en New Jersey es \$827.

El reporte encontro que 45% de los que rentan en New Jersey este año no pueden alcanzar de pagar por su apartamento por el promedio de renta en el mercado. Esto ha incrementado 41% desde el año pasado.

El Affordable Housign Network esta llamando

a que algunos pasos se tomen para resolver este problema. “Incrementando el salario minimo federal es una solución,” dijo Lucy Voorhoe del Affordable Housing Network. “Tambien pueden bajar el costo de vivienda y ayudar a personas a desarrollar entrenamiento de trabajo para que puedan obtener salarios mas altos.”

El Network esta apoyando una “plataforma de desarrollo comunitario” de 6 puntos que incluye creditos de impuestos estatales para llegar a la producción de vivienda de bajos ingresos, un programa estatal de asistencia de renta y otras medidas.

Segun otro reporte, “Trabajando Pero Todavia Pobre en New Jersey,” publicado por la Association for Children of New Jersey, New Jersey es uno de los estados mas caras para vivir. “En New Jersey es calculado aproximadamente que el salario para que puedan vivir una familia de cuatro (dos adultos y dos niños) es \$37,932 - mas que doble el nivel federal de pobreza para el mismo tamaño de familia.

El reporte indica que los salarios estan bajando. “Despues a ajustarse a la inflación, el salario minimo a hora es 30% mas bajo que lo que era en 1968. Una persona trabajando 30 horas por semana a \$7.00 a la hora, gana \$10,920 anualmente. Eso es \$2,213 mas que el nivel de pobreza para una familia. con un adulto y dos niños.

El ACNJ reporte tambien recomienda el incremento de el salario minimo federal. ACNJ tambien sugiere la extension del credito del Impuesto del Ingreso Ganade, y expandir las oportunidades de cuido de niños.





## ¿Habla Español?

Información acerca de sus derechos legales como inquilino esta disponible en español. Para recibir este material y noticias acerca de nuestras reuniones y talleres para inquilinos, llame al (973) 643-7711.

Mire a la paginas 16 - 19 para los articulos en español acerca sus derechos como inquilinos.



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*"Together we can move mountains. Alone, we can't move at all."*